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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON THE SUBJECT OF DISMISSING SCHOLARS FROM SCHOOL.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, *Feb.* 8, 1841.

The Committee on Education, to whom was referred an order of the 26th of January, requiring them to "consider the expediency of passing a law, by which School Teachers, (with or without the consent of prudential committees,) shall have power to dismiss scholars from our town schools, for bad behavior," have attended to the duty assigned them, and respectfully

REPORT :

That they do not think any legislation necessary on the subject of said order. It is their opinion that school committees, and, by consequence, school teachers, when acting under their direction, possess the power of dismissing scholars for bad behavior; and that it ought to be intrusted to them, rather than to prudential committees. In many towns, there is no such office as that of prudential committee; and where there is, it is not made their duty to have the superintendence of the schools. This is the province of the school committee elected by the town.

We say, that, in our opinion, school committees now have power to dismiss scholars for a term of time, from our town schools, for bad behavior. It is not to be found, it is true, in the express words of any statute; but the authority of a general care and superintendence of the schools, which is given them by the tenth section of the twenty-third chapter of the Revised Statutes, does, necessarily, empower them to suspend from school any person whose longer continuance therein would frustrate the design of its establishment. The school committees of the cities of Boston and Lowell, and of the towns of New Bedford, Nantucket, and Gloucester, and probably of many others, have drawn up rules for the management of their respective schools, on the presumption that this power now belongs to them. The regulations adopted by them require teachers to exclude from school such scholars as are absent, a certain number of times, without excuse. If they can exercise this power for a mere neglect of attendance, they most surely can for such disorderly behavior as would greatly impair the advantages of the school.

Though your Committee think that this power is already possessed, they think at the same time that it ought to be sparingly used; for those persons who are excluded from the privileges of a school under its oper-

ation, are almost always such as most need them. A wholesome discipline ought to be maintained ; and such measures ought to be carried into effect, if possible, as would extend the benefits of a school to all within its territorial limits. Legislation cannot provide against all the evils that may chance to disturb a public school, any more than it can reach all the troubles of an ill-governed family. Were we to commence a series of enactments for the purpose of pointing out what penalties should be annexed to the transgressions that may disturb these seminaries, instead of leaving our public schools, as they now are, under the superintendence and responsibility of town committees, it is to be feared that we should introduce more evils than we should remove.

Your Committee, therefore, conclude with repeating, that they do not think any legislation necessary on the subject of the order under consideration.

JOHN A. SHAW, *Chairman.*

[We publish the above report of the Committee on Education, in the House of Representatives, because the conclusion to which that committee has come, may go far, towards removing doubt and silencing controversy, on an important subject.

We most cordially concur in the opinion, expressed in the report, that, although the superintending committee may possess the power to expel a scholar from school, it is a power which should be very rarely exercised. If a child has a contagious disease, and the parents persist in sending him to school, there surely should be authority, somewhere, for his exclusion. But the cases, where the interference of the committee will be most frequently solicited, are those, where it should be most sparingly used. The candidates for expulsion will generally be turbulent, refractory scholars ; and these are the very ones who most need a subjugation to authority. If they defy the control of the teacher and committee, when young, will they not bid defiance to society and the laws of the land, when old ? Suppose only one school in ten, among all the schools in the State, should expel a scholar for mutinous conduct, or general bad behavior ; this would form a body of more than three hundred expelled scholars ;—or rather an army of more than three hundred picked men, to carry on a *guerilla* warfare against all the interests of society. It requires no power of prophecy to foretell, that, ten years hence, this would be a formidable host.

The family, in the first instance, is the place where the bad passions of children are to be brought into subjection. If not done there, it becomes so much the more important that it should be done in the school. If not done in either place, the community must suffer, through all its interests. Instead of insubordination at school, we shall have crime in society ; instead of employing school teachers, we must employ jailers ; instead of building schoolhouses, we must build prisons.

To expel a scholar from school for bad conduct, instead of using means proper to subdue him, is to get rid of a slight present evil by incurring a great future one. For the time being, such a course may appear to be better for the scholar, and for the other children ; but will it be better for either party, after the lapse of a few years ? This is the material question, because all sound conclusions respecting the public good must be drawn from an extensive survey of consequences.



We abhor corporal punishment, but we abhor the halter and the State prison more; and, in the present state of society, it is our belief, that if the first be not sometimes used, the last must be.

The great desideratum is, to find teachers who can manage and govern a school, without resorting to physical force; if this is not done, or cannot be done, then the next step is, to prepare such teachers, as fast as time will allow. But, in the interim, the schools must be continued; the children must not be allowed to desert them; nor, unless in the extremest cases,—such a case as it is hardly possible to conceive of,—should the scholars be expelled from them. If, just as the neck of any one of them begins to grow a little stiff, we decline to put forth any effort to bend it, will it not soon become too inflexible to be bent, unless by being broken? We hold, therefore, that although corporal punishment is a great evil,—and almost a shame to all parties concerned in it,—yet that it is not the greatest of evils; and that it is pusillanimity, as well as folly, to shrink from the crushing of the egg, but to wait composedly for the hatching of the viper.

But while we speak thus decidedly of the importance of retaining the refractory children in school, and still of upholding the authority of the teacher, we ought not to omit referring to the best, and, indeed, the only legitimate means, by which so great a good can be accomplished. We doubt whether there is ever a difficulty in the school, arising from insubordination, where indifference, to a greater or less extent, has not existed in the district. Where the school privileges are sufficiently prized, a good teacher will be obtained, and a public opinion in regard to order, regularity, and obedience, will prevail, which will be a law to the old, and will seem like one of the conditions of life to the young. A due appreciation of the value of education, and of the school as the principal means of bestowing it, is the grand remedy for all the nameless and innumerable difficulties which embarrass the schools. ED.]

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LETTERS FROM A TEACHER TO HER YOUNG FEMALE FRIEND, JUST ABOUT COMMENCING TO KEEP SCHOOL.

No. 1.

*My dear L—*: Your letter interests me much, in which you give such a moving picture of your new duties and responsibilities. Your image is quite familiar to me, surrounded by children to whom you have so often been the dispenser of love and kindness; but I was as much surprised as you expected, to learn that you had actually undertaken a school. I consider it the highest post of honor, and the most responsible office in the world, and you must have good courage to put yourself into it all unprepared. I might rather say, you are fool-hardy; for I know by experience what it is to assume such a trust, ignorant of a thousand things, one ought to know. I do not wonder at your complaints, for it must be difficult indeed for a beginner to keep school without books; and you say you are nearly reduced to that, as those furnished for your school are so few and so inadequate in themselves. I say "difficult for a beginner," for the longer I keep school, the fewer

books I use ; and often when I hear such complaints as yours, I think how well I could manage, in such circumstances, with my fancy for teaching things by word of mouth. I know it is highly desirable that all children should learn to study from books, because the habit of application is invaluable ; but with the help of a black-board, even lessons may be learned, to a great extent ; and books should always be subordinate to living instruction,—if I may so express the distinction,—when that is attainable. The elementary principles of all studies can best be given by immediate communication between the living instructor and the living scholar. And, then, there are so few school books well arranged and adapted for children's study, that I often throw aside the abundant supplies of such as there are, and adapt lessons I wish to give, according to my own plan, to the necessities of the moment, and present them in what I consider the natural order of things. And even when I use the best books, I prefer to give them as a sort of review of my oral instructions. One advantage of teaching, in this way, is the power of attention it cultivates ;—another is the value it gives to books, and the light it throws upon their contents. I like to have children know what a book is about, and feel an inclination to look for some specific thing in it, before they handle it. Such books are studied or read with threefold intelligence.

But as you have entered upon this task with so little previous preparation, you must be puzzled, indeed, to know how or where to begin. I confess that if I had been asked to recommend you, I should not have done so, except by saying that you were as kind and amiable a person as I should wish to place over a school full of children, and that you united with these qualities a native talent for controlling and influencing them ; but I should probably have added, that you knew nothing of this great art of teaching ; for, sincere as you know my interest in your welfare to be, I must say that my interest for your scholars is greater than for you. It will do you no ultimate injury to puzzle and toil through your first year of initiation ; but alas for those poor children, while you are learning your lesson ! Some of them, perhaps, will never go to school again, and this may be a golden time lost to them ; or, if not time quite lost, it will not be golden, which it might have been under other circumstances. Do not think me unkind in making so strong a statement of your inadequacy ; if I can give you a vivid sense of it, you will, perhaps, thank me, at the end of the year, and confess that it roused you to make exertions, which, at this moment, you hardly think possible. It requires not only a general cultivation of mind to fit one for this undertaking, but a familiarity with many branches of knowledge, and also with some methods of imparting them. The provision now made for the instruction of teachers is so good, that it seems hardly excusable in any one to try to teach without it. But it will not be, probably, till the schools of the State are very generally supplied with well-informed and intelligent teachers, and sufficient time has elapsed for some of the good effects to be made manifest in the improved character and elevated education of our Commonwealth, that the present efforts made for their education will be appreciated. Efforts like this can never, perhaps, be rightly estimated but by posterity ; for they work as gradually and imperceptibly, as nature does in the growth of a plant. When all the elements have conspired to its subterranean



and aërial growth, when light, heat, and moisture, have elaborated the nourishment, which, by the mysterious processes of nature, is drawn from the earth, and converted into stems and leaves, the perfect flower bursts suddenly upon the sight; and from this glory of the plant the seed is ripened which is to fall back upon the fruitful soil, and, taking root, produce new leaves, and flowers, and fruit. Is not this a fair emblem of the man to whom education is light, and heat, and moisture; and who, without it, is like the seed imbedded in a rock, which may lie inert for ages? And now, hoping I have convinced you that you have a great deal to do, I will tell you how you can teach geography with the help of the atlas which lies upon your desk, and which, you say, is the only one in your schoolroom. But this I must defer, until another opportunity.

Truly, yours,

M.

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### THE LOVE OF READING.

[From the Evangelical Magazine.]

Did parents realize the numerous advantages resulting from a love of reading, I am persuaded they would not grudge the cost of books necessary to create, cherish, and gratify it, in their children. How many anxious evening hours are spared to parents, in villages and cities, if their children, instead of running about the streets, (the parents know not in what company or employments,) are seated around the fireside, reading books of instruction and amusement! Even those parents whose strong authority can keep their children at home,—even they are saved the pain of seeing their children uneasy, or dozing away the weary evening hours, or engaged in noisy talk and sports which annoy the family;—all this is saved to them by cultivating the love of reading in them.

Seldom, very seldom, does one who is fond of reading, and who therefore employs the leisure moments in this delightful employment,—seldom does such a one engage in unbefitting, or vicious pursuits; seldom still, does one fond of reading come to a disgraceful end. "The idle man's brain is the devil's workshop," says an old proverb. How important, then, that parents, every where, see that this deceiver does not find "apartments to let," in their families!

Then, in conversation, mark the difference between the reading boy or girl, and the one who is debarred from books. The one has a thousand topics to occupy the thoughts, when no company is by,—to lighten toil and make it pleasant, or to fill up an otherwise idle hour,—to ponder over, as he runs an errand, or sits waiting for business; while the other, probably for want of something else to think about, is allowing his mind to run riot in forbidden subjects, or engaging his hands in deeds of mischief. And when conversation is allowed, what stale, flat, profitless chit-chat consumes the precious hours,—neither giving nor receiving any useful or truly pleasing information.

Let parents, then, awake to the importance of this subject,—its importance to health, to happiness, to usefulness. By a few dollars yearly expended in suitable books for their children, they may secure them from vices and habits which soon will cost tenfold as much;

from weariness, which no sum would induce any well-furnished mind, to endure for a single hour, and from ignorance, which, later in life, may cost them thousands. Parents, for your own sakes, for the sake of your children, of society, of your country and her free institutions,—I entreat you, think of these things more, and less of your money which you can well afford to part with to purchase your children's prosperity and happiness. A FATHER.

P. S. What I have said of books, applies also to periodicals. Every family that can at all afford it, should take religious and literary periodicals, and induce their children to read them carefully and regularly. Set them the *example*, along with the *precept*, and they will soon imbibe the love of reading.

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### HINTS TO PARENTS.

BY J. ABBOTT.

[From the District School Journal.]

Address the mind of the child through the senses, or through the faculties of the mind, by which the impressions of the senses are recognized or recalled. In other words, present every thing in such a way that it may convey vivid pictures to the mind. The senses are emphatically the great avenues to knowledge, in childhood; and it is consequently through them that we can have the easiest access. I can best illustrate what I mean by contrasting three ways of telling the same story.

"A man had a fine dog, and he was very fond of him; he used to take a great deal of care of him, and give him all he wanted; and, in fact, he did all he could to make him comfortable, so that he should enjoy a happy life. Thus he loved his dog very much, and took great pleasure in seeing him comfortable and happy."

This, now, presents very few sensible images to the mind of the child. In the following form, it would convey the same general ideas, but far more distinctly and vividly:—

"There was once a man who had a large black and white dog, beautifully spotted. He made a little house for him, out in a sunny corner of the yard, and used to give him as much meat as he wanted. He would go and see him sometimes, and pat his head, while he was lying upon his straw in his little house. He loved his dog."

Would you give still more point to the story, let your style be abrupt and striking, and give the reins entirely to the imagination. Suppose the narrator, with a child on each knee, begins thus:—

"A man, one pleasant morning, was standing upon the steps of his door, and he said, 'I think I will go and see my dog, Towser.'"

"Now, where do you think this dog, Towser, lived?"

"I don't know," will be the reply of each listener, with a face full of curiosity and interest.

"Why, old Towser was out in a little square house which his master had made for him in a corner of the yard. So he took some meat in his hand for Towser's breakfast. Do you think he took out a plate, and a knife and fork?"



"This man was very kind to Towser; his beautiful, spotted, black and white Towser;—and when he got to his house, he opened the door, and said,

"'Towser, Towser, come out here, Towser.'

"So Towser came running out, and stood there wagging his tail. His master patted him on the head. You may jump down on your hands and feet, and I will tell you exactly how it was. You shall be Towser. Here, you may get under the table, which will do for his house. Then I will come and call you out, and pat you on the head," etc., etc.

No one at all acquainted with children need be told how much stronger an interest the latter style of narration would excite. And the difference is, in a philosophical point of view, that the former is expressed in abstract terms, which the mind comes to appreciate fully only after long habits of generalization; in the latter, the meaning comes through sensible images, which the child can picture to himself with ease and pleasure, by means of those faculties of the mind, whatever they may be, by which the images presented by the senses, are perceived, at first, and afterwards renewed through the magical stimulus of language. This is the key to one of the great secrets of interesting children, and in teaching the young generally. Approach their minds through the senses. Describe every thing as it presents itself to the eye and to the ear. A different course is, indeed, often wise; as for example, when you wish to exercise and develop the power of generalization, and abstraction; but generally, when your wish is merely to interest, or to convey knowledge, i. e. where you wish to gain the readiest and most complete access to the heart, these are the doors. You use others after a time, occasionally, for the sake mainly of having them opened and in use.

#### A SONG FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN.

##### TRY AGAIN.

'Tis a lesson you should heed,

Try again;

If at first you don't succeed,

Try again;

Then your courage should appear,

For if you will persevere,

You will conquer, never fear;

Try again.

Once, or twice, though you may fail,

Try again;

If you would at last prevail,

Try again;

If we strive, 'tis no disgrace

Though we may not win the race:

What should you do in this case?

Try again.

If you find your task is hard,

Try again;

Time will bring you your reward;

Try again;

All that other folks can do,

Why, with patience, should not you?

Only keep this rule in view,

TRY AGAIN.

## COMMON SCHOOLS.

[From the New England Farmer.]

Though *common*, these humble seminaries are mighty agents: they are the lever which has raised New England to her high position. Much as we are indebted to Colleges, Academies, and other similar institutions, we owe more,—inestimably more,—to *Common Schools*. Opening their doors to all, sowing the seeds of learning, broadcast, over the land, their contributions to intelligence, and consequently to prosperity and enjoyment, though bestowed in small portions to each, yet in the aggregate swell to a vast amount. From these primary assemblies ooze out the rills, which, commingling, form the streams that are ever washing out our moral and political stains. Stop the flowings of these waters, and our fair land would fast blacken with ignorance, vice, and crime. Liberty would lose her richest nourishment, philanthropy her most invigorating draughts, Christianity her invaluable supplies.

Christians, philanthropists, patriots, cherish these nurseries of the mind and heart of the next generation. Place them so high that the children of the rich shall be sent here to meet and mingle with those of the poor; here let all classes early take lessons in republican equality; let the children of the wealthy here learn, in early life, that they are being trained up for scenes in which the most industrious, the most intellectual, the most deserving are to be at the head of the class; here let the poor boy learn, that when he outstrips the rich man's son in the race of learning or moral excellence, the prize of distinction or approbation will be bestowed upon himself.

Farmers, these schools are invaluable to your children and to your country. Few higher duties rest upon you, than that of lending wise, generous, and constant aid to the school in your own district; notice and encourage the teacher; by precept and example influence all parents to send their children to the school; supply your children well with books; let them be at school in season, and constant in attendance; help cheerfully to make the house comfortable. These points are all of them important; each is worthy of serious thoughts; and when well considered in all their bearings and influences, you cannot fail to see that faith, in our country's future eminence and true greatness, must rest mainly upon the efficiency and high character of the *Common School*.

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How many thoughtless young men have spent those evenings in a tavern or grogshop, which ought to have been devoted to reading! How many parents, who never spent twenty dollars for books for their families, would gladly have given thousands to reclaim a son or daughter, who had ignorantly and thoughtlessly fallen into temptation!

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The mother of the family, being one of its heads, and having a more immediate charge of children, ought to be intelligent in mind, pure in language, and always cheerful and circumspect. As the instructor of her children, she should herself be instructed.



## MASSACHUSETTS COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM.

[Extracts from the North American Review, January, 1841.]

## NORMAL SCHOOLS.

The Normal Schools, whenever mentioned in the Returns, [the Abstracts of the Massachusetts School Returns,] are spoken of in terms which show how much is expected from them. As the policy of the Legislature, in providing for the education of teachers, is still, however, sometimes questioned, it may be well to examine some of the evidences and grounds of the opinion, very generally existing in the minds of the friends of education, of the necessity of such a provision, and of the wisdom of giving continued support to a course of measures for the purpose.

The first, we believe, who brought this subject prominently before the public, was the author of "Letters on the Free Schools of New England." These appeared in 1824, and were followed soon after by valuable "Essays" on the subject, by the same writer. In 1825, a series of essays appeared in the "Connecticut Observer," and afterwards separately, from the pen of T. H. Gallaudet, late Principal of the American Asylum for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, upon a "Plan of a Seminary for the Education of Instructors of Youth." In these he recommends the project, with a great variety of arguments. At a meeting of the American Institute, held August 29th, 1836, after the subject of "the professional education of teachers" had been discussed, the following resolves were passed:—that "the business of teaching should be performed by those who have studied the subject of instruction as a profession;" and that "there ought to be at least one seminary in each State, devoted exclusively to the education of teachers."

The qualifications spoken of by the school committees as essential to the character of a good teacher, and which would, by great numbers of them, be considered indispensable,—if it were possible to consider the highest qualifications indispensable, and find any teachers for the schools,—are such as can only be found, with some rare exceptions, in those who have undergone a specific preparation. To say nothing of the positive acquirements which a teacher should possess, of the familiar acquaintance he should have with arithmetic, with geography, and with history,—interesting facts in which, may be thrown in continually in teaching geography,—or of the skill he should have in reading and in penmanship, he ought to possess a knowledge of various methods of teaching these branches. Now, this knowledge of methods, of their modes of operation, and of their success, can be acquired only by opportunities of hearing them fully and familiarly discussed, and of seeing them in operation. This might be done by an association of teachers, so situated as to meet together, every evening, for months in succession, and have classes of their pupils meet with them. But it can be most successfully done only at a school where the attention can be turned to such points for a long time together, under the superintendence of an able and experienced teacher. There are no branches in which such flagrant deficiencies are felt, and so many improvements are to be made, as in these essentials and staples of the district schools.

A good instructor must have aptness to teach. The want of this is

lamented, in multitudes of instances, in persons otherwise possessed of excellent qualities. Aptness to teach is unquestionably a peculiar gift, like a talent for painting or for mechanics. But, like them, it must be perfected by much use, under skilful masters. A moderate talent of this kind, highly cultivated, will be more effectual than great talent without cultivation; which can be given only by exercising the faculty under the eye and guidance of one who can point out failures and suggest the remedy. Where can this be done, but in a place of preparation for teachers?

The teacher must have ability to manage and govern. This talent is more rare even than the last mentioned. And although it partly depends on a particular organization, and is found very widely different, in different individuals, it can no more spring at once into perfect activity, than the talent for marshalling armies. The talent for governing children to the best end depends chiefly on perfect self-control. But when we include in it that directing power which can bring into vigorous action all the powers of a child, keeping the lower in just subordination to the higher, and having in view the greatest permanent good of the individual; it comprehends, in its exercise, a complete knowledge of the character of the pupil, with all the motives and springs of action, for good and for ill. It is needless to say, that a talent, which requires for its full exercise the complete survey of so wide a field, cannot be easily matured. All the helps that can be administered will still leave enough for the individual to do.

It is not easy to overstate the importance of this power of controlling, or the extent of its influence on the future well-being of the pupil. On the susceptible child, on one who is delicately constituted, the influence of the gifted teacher is all but omnipotent. His power to repress the bad, and to stimulate the good tendencies, is almost unbounded. Not only his intentional teachings, but his words, his manners, his looks, the tone of his voice, his smile, and his frown, sink into the heart of the child, and control his inmost being. It is a beautiful trait in the character of children, that their sympathy with the exalted and generous qualities is far stronger than with their opposites. The malignant and selfish qualities excite, indeed, but they excite to opposition. They call out corresponding qualities for self-defence. They excite, but it is to aversion and hatred. It would be well, if these feelings could be prevented from going beyond the hateful object; but the evil propensities are blind, and being once excited in a child against an unfeeling, unjust, or selfish teacher, they extend also towards learning, order, discipline, intelligence, refinement,—all the qualities of which the hated individual is supposed to be the representative.

It is apparent, then, that too much attention cannot be given by school committees, in the selection of teachers, to every thing which goes to form the moral character of the candidate; and it is most gratifying to find, that many of the committees are fully aware of the importance of these considerations.

Further, it is obvious that the teacher, in order to be able to accomplish all that he ought, in the performance of his high duties, should be familiar with the elements of the human constitution in its twofold nature; with the growth of the mind, the nature of the moral sentiments and the mental faculties, and the formation of mental habits; and



with the physiology of the body, on the healthfulness of which, the development and energy of the moral and intellectual qualities must depend. Here are two paths, each leading into wide fields of human knowledge. Can they be traversed without study? Will the unaided sagacity of all who are to teach, direct them to precisely what is most essential in these extensive sciences?

Again, every teacher should be acquainted with the elements of natural science; with something of natural history, natural philosophy, and chemistry. There is not a day in school, which might not be enlivened by the description of some natural object; there is hardly an hour, during which an occasion does not occur for drawing the attention to some appearance presented, or some process going on, or for giving information of some interesting fact. Most of the children at the Common Schools are destined to the happy lot of spending their lives in the country. One would think, that a prominent object of elementary education, there at least, should be, to make them acquainted with the objects by which they are always to be surrounded. The naturalist finds, in the study of these objects, inexhaustible sources of pleasure; and, though it might be absurd to attempt to make all children naturalists, it would certainly be well to put those who have a taste for such pursuits within reach of these fountains of simple, innocent, and never-ceasing enjoyment. At least, they should have that knowledge of the properties of the objects about them, which would enable them to turn those objects to some use.

We have enumerated only the most important of the parts of knowledge which should be possessed by the teachers of the Common Schools, and some of the endowments for which they should be distinguished. If the Union District system should go generally into operation, as we trust it will, a higher class of schools would be created, with more advanced studies, and requiring additional and higher qualifications in the teachers. It is apparent, then, that the Normal Schools are imperiously called for by the wants of the Common Schools, as they now exist, and are still more essential in view of the great improvements which the system is destined to receive.

#### SCHOOL BOOKS.

Another of the greatest and most universal evils, and one of which the loudest complaints are made in the reports, is the multiplicity of school books. In very many schools, the time of the teacher is frittered away in hearing several classes in the same study, merely because the pupils have not all the same text-books; when, if they were all in one class, the teacher could spend that time in communicating instruction which is now occupied in asking questions and hearing answers. The committee have power to remedy this defect, by selecting the books to be used in the schools, and requiring uniformity. But this is a power which they are almost always unwilling to exercise. It can hardly be exercised without giving offence. Yet there is scarcely a matter in which it is so important that an umpire should act. If the choice is left to the parents, they must, almost of necessity, choose different books. If left, as it often is, to the teachers, there can be no uniformity, so long as they are liable to be changed every year; as each successive teacher will have his favorite text-books, which he will require all

those, who have no books, to procure. An effectual remedy would be in requiring the school committee, by a vote of the town, to exercise this power in reference to every school. This might often be done, almost without expense, though not without a little trouble, by selecting a different text-book for each of two or three contiguous schools, and encouraging the exchange of books among those children of the several schools who did not wish to be at the expense of new ones. The evil has been remedied, in some instances, by causing a depository to be formed, somewhere in the town, for the books recommended by the committee, and furnishing them thus at reduced prices.

#### WANT OF INTEREST IN SCHOOLS.

Another subject, of almost universal complaint with the school committees, is want of interest in the schools on the part of parents and guardians. There is but one opinion as to the advantage of their frequently visiting the schools; and yet, in many places, most parents never see them, nor ever take the pains to become acquainted with the teacher. It is hardly conceivable, that a parent should be indifferent to the physical welfare and happiness of his offspring for so large a portion of their lives, or to the moral and mental qualities of those, who are to have so important an influence on their whole future character. There must be some general mistake on this subject; some feeling, on the part of parents, that their visits would not be acceptable; that their presence might be looked on as an intrusion. It can only be for some such reason, that fathers, and, especially, that mothers, should so forego their natural rights, and neglect so important and obvious a duty. If parents could but realize how full of fears and misgivings a teacher often is, how lonely and unsustained he is apt to feel, and how much they can do to lighten the heavy burden of his difficult and perplexing duties by a kind suggestion, or a judicious word of commendation; how much a generous expression of confidence will quicken his feeling of responsibility, elevate his sense of character, and stimulate him to increased diligence,—and how completely, on the other hand, a little unreasonable complaint, very easy to utter, will thwart his best efforts, and neglect and distrust discourage his well-meant exertions,—instead of meeting him with reserve, and watching his faults with jealousy, they would welcome him as a fellow-laborer, cheer him by their confidence, sustain his authority by their countenance, admit him sometimes into their families, and show him they are his friends. And, if they would but remember, how much the heart of a child is alive to sympathy, they would sometimes visit his place of labor, and, if at no other time, at least let him have the pleasure of anticipating their presence on the days of examination. Such considerations are feelingly and repeatedly urged throughout these [the school committees'] reports; and if no other good should come from them than the establishing of a better understanding between parents and teachers, they would be richly worth all the labor, great as that is, and all the expense, which they have cost. And it is impossible to read them without feeling confident that this will be their effect. There is such a thing as sympathy between man and man, and these powerful appeals to it cannot, from the nature of human affections, be unavailing.



## APPARATUS.

The very general want of apparatus in the schools is only another indication of the humble character of the teaching. It is, however, gratifying to perceive, that the necessity of apparatus is becoming more and more general. The articles, which are thought most necessary, are black-boards, maps, globes, and philosophical and chemical apparatus. Still more important, as more universally necessary, would seem to be apparatus to illustrate, or rather to render intelligible, the tables of weights and measures, which are usually required to be learnt by children, as ignorant of their meaning as if the words were in a foreign language. The obtuseness or entire ignorance, not uncommonly observed, in many persons otherwise intelligent, as to what relates to the measurement of solids, and even of surfaces, may doubtless be traced to their having failed to get definite ideas from the earliest lessons given them at school. It is one, out of numerous instances that might be given of a mistake, almost universal, in teaching the elements of natural science, that the lesson containing the abstract principle is presented first, and the illustration or experiment, afterwards. The natural order, it is almost too obvious to remark, is to present, first, the objects, or the experiments,—the nearest approach that we can make to the thing itself, or to the principle in nature,—and afterwards the statements, deductions, and generalizations, which are founded upon them.

Another kind of apparatus, that should be in all the schools, is a series of geometrical figures and solids, all that are in common use, and whose names form a part of the language, for the express purpose of teaching language. What other sure way is there of teaching the meaning of *cubic*, *conical*, *cylindrical*, and other similar words, that are constantly occurring, than by showing the figures, or, still better, the cube, cone, and cylinder, themselves?

## SCHOOL COMMITTEES.

A subject of preëminent importance to the welfare of the schools, is the character and duties of the school committees. A great change has already been wrought in some parts of the Commonwealth, which needed it most. Better men are chosen to the office, and, now that they are paid for their services, are expected to perform its duties. These volumes afford abundant evidence, that these duties are generally understood, and their importance felt; and, if the excellent practice of publishing the reports is continued, they soon will be so, universally. Every suggestion, made by any committee,—no matter where situated, no matter how little known,—goes to add to the common light; and observations upon some of the poorest schools in the Commonwealth will serve to improve the best. If continued, the "School Returns" will be to the school-committee man and to the teacher, what the Term Reports are to the lawyer, or the Reports of Cases to the physician.

Many of the committees are evidently as competent, in all respects, as could any where be found. And this good spirit will spread. Reports and returns have this year been received from every town in Middlesex, Hampshire, Norfolk, and Bristol counties, and from all but one in Hampden, Franklin, and Dukes; and we cannot read these

reports but with a feeling of pride, that there are, in all parts of the Commonwealth, men capable of feeling so warmly, and of uttering with such power, the great truths in relation to the condition of the Common Schools.

It is evident, therefore, that that is done in many towns, which should be done in all. The very best men, those most distinguished for intelligence, for acquirements, and, especially, for their high moral tone, should, alone, be upon the committees. Such men should not, as often heretofore, decline this service. It is, if faithfully performed, always laborious; it is usually ill paid, and often thankless. But these are reasons why those, who are qualified for it, should not feel at liberty to decline it. It is time that this matter should be understood. There is not a child, in the poorest district in the country, who might not be so trained, by the means that the schools could present, as to enjoy the highest and purest pleasures that can fall to the lot of the most favored individual. The coming generation has a claim upon the present, not only for liberty, but for those higher advantages which give value to liberty itself. And on whom does this claim rest, if not on those who are capable of feeling it?—upon the men who recognize the duties which the relation between man and man imposes? We have not a right to sit in our studies, enjoying the luxuries of thought, and books, and leisure, and say to our poor brethren without, “Be ye warmed and clad; let the child of the poor and depressed man become wise, and learned, and virtuous, if he can.” Something is to be *done*. We cannot, believers in a spiritual religion, acknowledge, as we do, the rights of the body to be relieved, and yet remain deaf to the higher wants of the soul. No; we must be consistent; and there must be a spirit worthy of such a cause; not that sycophantic spirit, which is ready to cajole the ignorant and the degraded by flattering them, that they are more competent than any other men living, to provide suitable education for their children; but that lofty spirit of truth, which dares to tell them, that education is their great want, and that it will come best,—that it can come only,—from the intelligent and the virtuous. It is the just boast of Massachusetts, that the property of all is taxed for the education of all. Would it not be, at least, as just a cause of boasting, that the talents, and learning, and skill of all were taxed for the instruction of all?

The reports, from beginning to end, are full of evidence of the inestimable value of the School Registers. Never before has been brought to view, and in no other way could be brought to view, the vast loss to the people of this Commonwealth from irregularity of attendance at school.

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#### TRUTH.

One of the most difficult, and at the same time important points of morality, is that which respects the law of truth. In this particular, persons not among the abandoned part of society, but whose principles are pliant to circumstances, are often observed to obey the rule with not a few exceptions; and the most considerate and wary, who mean that their yea shall be yea, and nay nay, may be admonished frequently to



inquire, whether they adhere to the straitforward path of sincerity with all the exactness which becomes their pretensions.

The code of minor morals, which takes cognizance of the ordinary intercourse, and the every-day actions of life, consigns the wanton and shameless liar to the bottom of the scale that marks the gradations of human character. He is despised as a fool and a coward, if not detested as a criminal and a knave. His folly so generally recoils upon himself, and his duplicity so plagues the inventor, that it may be naturally expected that contempt and pity should almost predominate over resentment and abhorrence. But the common judgment, which brands the gross prevaricator and habitual trickster with ignominy, may be supposed to overlook or excuse many cases of plausible, and less glaring insincerity, which an enlightened and tender conscience will not fail to condemn and avoid. The law of honor does not always run parallel with the law of God; and fashion and custom give a sanction, or an indulgence to maxims, which a true system of morality and the authority of religion refuse to allow. The extent of the obligation to speak the truth, ethical doctors, apparently in an equal degree its friends, determine differently. Whether a voluntary deception be ever lawful, is a standing question for syllogistic and forensic disputation in all the universities. Some teachers agree, that such deception may be required by particular cases in practice, but must never be allowed in theory. Thus "they incur a charge of deception in the very act of persuading their neighbors that a deception is never to be admitted." On this subject, it is believed, an honest mind is generally a sufficient instructor. It is very certain, that veracity should not be forsaken by prudence. Not all truth may be spoken, nor at all times. There is a distinction between the "*suppressio veri*" and "*suggestio falsi*," between simulation and dissimulation. None but a dolt or a bravo will disregard every degree of concealment and reserve, and tell all he thinks. Some people make a boast of always speaking their mind. The merit, however, of this frankness, depends on the sort of mind they speak; for if it be a bad one, there would be more merit in keeping their own secret, and letting their spleen and anger, and envy and malice, spend their force within. This abusive sincerity may prove the defect of the judgment, or strength of the passions, the coarseness of the character, or the brutality of the disposition; but it cannot prove respect for truth. Censor is a shrewd judge of character; an accurate weigher of the merits and demerits of his associates; and a free speaker of the opinions he forms. Whilst he is lavish of praise on his favorites, he is entirely willing that those whom he rates low in point of talents or virtues should have no room to imagine he esteems them more than he does. The consequence is, that he loses the good will, by wounding the self-love, of some very worthy people; and is thought, by those who see only this trait of his character, more acute than wise, and more frank than amiable. — *Selected.*

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In Holland and Germany, no school exists in which the whole weight of teaching 500 or even 200 children, is thrown upon one master. The usual proportion of teachers to children, in the poorer schools, is one master or assistant teacher to every 60 children.

[Below, is an Act of the Legislature, just passed, relative to the distribution of the income of the Massachusetts School Fund. It will be seen that, on the tenth day of July next, the income of said fund for almost eighteen months, will be distributed among the towns which shall have made the *Returns and Reports*, and raised, by tax, the sums, required by the existing laws. We give the earliest possible notice of this fact, that no town may incur a forfeiture by neglect; and we think the editors of newspapers would render a service to their readers by copying this notice. Ed.]

### AN ACT concerning the Income of the Massachusetts School Fund.

*Be it enacted, &c., as follows:*

Section 1. The School Committee of each city and town shall in each year ascertain, by actual examination or otherwise, the number of persons between the ages of four and sixteen years, belonging to such city or town, on the first day of May, and shall make a certificate thereof, and also of the sum raised by the city or town for the support of schools, including only wages and board of teachers and fuel for the schools during the said year, and shall transmit the same to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, on or before the last day of the following April, which certificate shall be in the following form, to wit:

We, the School Committee of \_\_\_\_\_, do certify, from the best information we have been able to obtain, that on the first day of May, in the year \_\_\_\_\_, there were belonging to said town the number of \_\_\_\_\_ persons between the ages of four and sixteen years; and we further certify that said town raised the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars for the support of Common Schools for the said year, including only the wages and board of teachers, and fuel for the schools.

} School Committee.

\_\_\_\_\_, ss. On this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, personally appeared the above-named School Committee of \_\_\_\_\_, and made oath that the above certificate by them subscribed is true. Before me, \_\_\_\_\_ Justice of the Peace.

Section 2. The income of the Massachusetts School Fund to the first day of June in each year, except the sum of two hundred and forty dollars appropriated to the support of schools among the Indians, shall be apportioned by the Secretary and Treasurer, and paid over by the Treasurer, on the tenth day of July, to the Treasurers of the several cities and towns, for the use of the Common Schools therein, according to the number of persons therein between the ages of four and sixteen years, ascertained and certified as in the preceding section; provided, however, that no such apportionment shall be made to any city or town which shall not have made, on or before the last day of April, the return required by the preceding section, and the report and returns required by the statute of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight, chapter one hundred and five; or which shall not have raised by taxation, for the support of schools, including only wages and board of teachers, and fuel for the schools, during the said year, a sum equal at least to one dollar and twenty-five cents for each person between the ages of four and sixteen years, belonging to said city or town, on the first day of May of said year.

Section 3. The income of the Massachusetts School Fund from the fifteenth day of January, one thousand eight hundred and forty, to the first day of June, one thousand eight hundred and forty-one, except what is appropriated to schools among the Indians, shall be apportioned and paid over on the tenth day of July next to the several cities and towns, according to the number of persons respectively therein between the ages of four and sixteen years, returned as in the certificate required by the first section of this act, or the certificate required by the third section of the statute of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-nine, chapter fifty-six, and which shall have raised by taxation, for the support of schools, during the year one thousand eight hundred and forty, the sum required by said third section, and which shall also have made, on or before the last day of April next, the report and returns required by the statute of one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight, chapter one hundred and five.

Section 4. So much of the statute of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight, chapter one hundred and five, as gives the Board of Education authority to prescribe at what time the reports and returns of School Committees shall be made, and also so much of the statute of the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-nine, chapter fifty-six, as is inconsistent with the provisions of this act, is hereby repealed.

Approved by the Governor, February 8th, 1841.

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